To Be Taken Before Sailing

By IRVIN S. COBB

By the author of "Speaking of Operations"

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You can learn about women from any poor slob,
But to learn about Europe, consult Mr. Cobb.

—As you'll observe from the above, this book has made one ex-tourist burst out into worse than poetry. Another strong man, who had sought out the monuments and galleries of Europe in quest of culture and brought back something in between a museum sneeze and a graveyard cough, burst into tears.

Be guided, while there is yet time, O Tourist, and take Dr. Cobb's prescription. It involves a certain amount of liking for human nature, and a bit of application to such uncouth spectacles as the hind-quarters of a mule in Cadiz, a police court in London and a ham prize fight in the land of the snorting bull. Also, Paris—Paris, "with a stein on the table and a good cash register ringing clear."

But read the book yourself, and at your own risk if you're an ex-tourist instead of a prospective one. For at this point the publisher's blurb writer protested that Mr. Cobb was breaking his heart, and the editor decided to go right over to Paris in quest of manuscripts.

Price $1.00

To My Dad on his 56th
Birthday.

May health and happiness
be yours

Gertrude

To Be Taken
Before Sailing

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Leave me here, alone
but satisfied . . .

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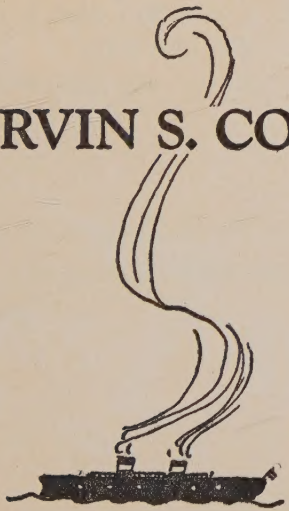

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Leave me here, alone but satisfied . . .
Frontispiece

I was bored stiff and Lawsy, how my poor dogs ached!
Facing page 24

The open-fronted studio of a genius whose specialty was embroidering the rumps of the local mules.
Facing page 36

BALLYHOO

AS a general proposition, an author's foreword is either an indictment of the reader's stupidity or a confession on the part of the author of his inability to make clear what he's driving at. More often than not, it is the latter—a combination of excuse and apology and attempted interpretation: in short, an alibi offered in advance of the commission of a literary crime.

My defense for writing this book is that for a long time I have been brooding over some such undertaking. To me it has seemed there existed a crying and provocative need that some voice, however puny, should be uplifted in behalf of and for the better guidance of inexperienced Americans set-

ting forth upon their first visit to Europe and the nearer East.

It is to these worthy compatriots of mine, and especially to those among them who as tourists are still greenhorns, that I would address myself in the pages which follow this opening burst. I would help, if so be I can, to warn them away from some of the mantraps into which my own stumbling feet led me when I myself was in my novitiate. There are countless standard works advising the stranger regarding the spots he should visit. I strive to advise him regarding the spots he should shun.

There is not room herein for enumerating these spots. I propose merely to lay down a few general rules which, if adhered to by the reader who subsequently crosses the Atlantic eastward-bound, will, I am

confident, yield me my reward in the form of a personal vote of thanks from him when he gets home again, or even before he gets home. Naturally, I'd like for him to buy his own copy of this book at the regular price, instead of borrowing a copy from someone else. The publishers like that idea also.

I. S. C.

New York,
April, 1930.

TO BE TAKEN BEFORE SAILING

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THIS year a large number of us will be going abroad on pleasure, as the saying is, bent. Many more who were worse than bent during the recent unpleasantness of the latter part of 1929 in Wall Street will forgo their plans for going abroad and will remain on at home doing the best they can with such white chips as they may have left. Just lately I heard about a gentleman who had meant to take his own car over for a tour of the Continent but now expects to be driving another gentleman's car through the summer for forty dollars a week—and glad to get it. There must be quite a group in the same fix. I'm merely citing an instance which came under my personal notice.

Even so, the annual exodus from these shores to those shores will be of impressive dimensions. Come good times or bad times, it always is. With us, the wanderlust has become a tribal attribute. Included among the travelers will be quite a lot who have not hitherto visited foreign parts. It is to these individuals who gird themselves for the Great Adventure, that I would address myself with a few hints, suggestions, and well-meant admonitions.

My opening bit of advice is as follows:

Before setting out, be sure to provide yourselves with copies of the standard guidebooks which deal with the countries you mean to visit. Carefully read these guidebooks from cover to cover, paying particular attention to the names of places, points, and buildings cited as being of prime im-

portance to the sightseer. A good idea is to have at hand notebooks in which to set down the cathedrals, churches, palaces, art-exhibits, famous ruins, etc., etc., etc. That is highly essential unless one is able to memorize the complete list and have it constantly on the tip of the tongue.

This knowledge will enable you to know what to avoid. It is terribly important to know what to avoid—especially art-galleries and cathedrals. I claim it is possible to make a complete success of the average trans-Atlantic vacation by religiously staying away from at least fifty per cent of the spots which the guide-books say one should view. Staying away from them gives you time for observing the people of a strange land, their customs and manners, their habits and their deportment, what they eat and

how they eat it, what they wear and how they wear it, where they go and why they do go—in short, gives one a picture of a race rather than a confused, incomplete jumble and a hodge-podge of hasty impressions of show-places which very frequently offer nothing symptomatic of the color and temper of that race.

For years and years and years, the efforts of the foreign publishers of guide-books to make the American people art-gallery-conscious have been consistently carried on. To a considerable extent this campaign has succeeded. Countless thousands of travel-worn, weary-legged Americans, obeying the herd-instinct, have allowed themselves to be rushed headlong from one art-gallery to another like sheep going down a loading chute, when, if the truth were known, per-

haps not one in ten of them is at heart interested in art-galleries purely as such. There is a belief fostered by those fiends in human form who get up the guide-books that the tenderfoot lumbering at top speed through an art-gallery thereby acquires culture. But you wouldn't expect a youth to acquire an education by crossing the Yale campus on a pair of roller-skates, would you? Well, then?

For an example of what I am trying to prove, put the shoe on the other fellow's foot: Let us conceive of a European as landing from his ship. It is his first visit to the States. His time is limited. He can give but one day to observing the wonders of New York because tonight he must be on his way to Chicago and all points west. This provides ample time for a British

writer who is compiling material for a book on those quaint creatures known as Americans. I once knew a distinguished British author who spent three weeks leaping, like the chamois of the Alps, from place to place, getting as far west as Indianapolis and as far south as Washington, and then went home and embalmed the fruits of his impressions in a large volume dealing exhaustively with this republic, and pointing out on practically every page where we had failed and come short. The work was most favorably received on the other side. George Bernard Shaw had a regular fit over it, and the British press hailed it as a graphic likeness of the souls of an inferior species of mammalia addicted to horn-rimmed glasses, chewing-gum, and gang-killings; and, as I recall, Dean Inge said what else could one expect

from a gang of lousy non-conformists anyhow?

But our imaginary visitor happens to be neither essayist nor novelist but merely a reasonably intelligent visitor motivated by a rational and proper desire to give our folks an honest if hurried once-over. Let us assume he adheres to guide-book ritualism. So he spends the forenoon at the Aquarium, which is all right if he is by profession a fishmonger or by choice a fish-fancier or even if he just naturally likes fish; but really it does not give more than a superficial insight into the characteristic traits of the American nation. And after the Aquarium he rides in a cab, eating a sandwich on the way, up to Grant's Tomb for an exciting hour or so; and he rounds out his day at the Hall of Fame. Would you, or would

you not, say that, his haste considered, he had carried away with him a fair impression of life in New York City? Or would you say that by a stroll along Broadway and a stroll along Fifth Avenue and a ride through Harlem and a peep at the East Side, and a casual conversation with a policeman and a chauffeur and with Grover Whalen—Grover would be sure to be bobbing up sometime during the day—he might have gathered, in at least a sketchy sense, a swift impression of the metropolitan cross-sections?

You would! Then why not try to develop the same viewpoint when the matter becomes personal and you are making your first trip abroad and your itinerary is briskly scheduled and somebody insists on shooting you in and out of a mess of art-galleries in-

stead of giving you a chance to see for yourself the tremendously dramatic every-day things which really count?

What is true of the guide-books and the guides with regard to European art-galleries likewise is true of them with regard to their churches and their cathedrals. If this or that historic church is a shrine of the faith which you accept, or, on the other hand, if you are a lover of ecclesiastical architecture or of ecclesiastical decorations, why, then that's a different matter. In the one instance you should be permitted to worship there at your leisure; in the other, you should have opportunity—or should take it—for as prolonged a period as you please in study of the details and the effects which interest you. But, presumed that you are neither of these types but are just an or-

dinary layman, why should you be driven, like a dumb beef-critter in the stockyard, from one stately—or, as the case may be, crumbly pile to another at the dictates of a perfectly silly custom?

Nevertheless we submit to it. In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, we dumbly submit to it. I did—the first time I crossed. That's a good many years behind me, but the painful memories of what I underwent abide with me yet. I recall as though it were but yesterday how I scoured the art-galleries of France and Italy seeking out their treasures. All of them contained art treasures and most of them needing scouring. But from now on, so far as I am concerned, somebody else may enjoy those concessions. I took the treatment, and I was cured and still am cured.

Possibly there was some excuse for me. In all modesty I may say that I had a classical background. In my youth I was the Younger Bohemian Set of Paducah. I drew pictures; I dreamed of growing up to be a cartoonist. The first money I ever earned with my pen was not by writing. I got a dollar—a whole big dollar—for a pen-and-ink sketch which I sold to an illustrated weekly called Texas Siftings. It died shortly thereafter; I guess the prices paid to outside contributors proved too heavy a drain upon its finances. I was about fifteen then or maybe sixteen. With old Mr. Kane, our leading house, sign, wagon, and portrait painter, I constituted the artistic group or circle on our side of town. There was a gentleman who at intervals invaded the neighborhood taking orders for enlarging photographs—a

large crayon enlargement absolutely free if the customer signed up for the handsome gold frame with the red plush insets—but he was a transient and in a measure an interloper, and I doubt whether you could call him a true creator. Old Mr. Kane and I really made up the resident art-colony. But long before I met Europe face to face, I had learned that whatever my future medium of expression might be, it certainly wasn't going to be the pencil or the brush. All the same, I suffered myself to be cantered past countless miles of Old Masters and Young Messers. I may have pretended that I was enjoying myself but that was merely a pose. Secretly I was bored stiff, and, Lawsy, how my poor feet ached! When I took off my shoes at night I used to yelp—partly from anguish and partly from

I was bored stiff and Lawsy,
how my poor dogs ached!

joy—until the people in the adjoining rooms must have thought somebody on that floor had smuggled in a coon-dog. As I look back on it all, the sole net result of value that I can remember having gleaned from the pictures was my discovery that St. Lawrence the Martyr by right should have been the patron saint of Harvard's football team. He was always dying on a gridiron.

So when I got home again and the chiropodist was through with me after making as thorough a job as he could hope to make with the damaged goods he had to work on, I took a solemn resolution. I said to myself:

"Never again will I permit anybody to drag me weary leagues to look at paintings just because somebody thought they were paintings and put frames on 'em and hung

'em on a wall. In future, when I go on tour to alien climes I largely shall give myself over to study of the most interesting and vital things on earth, to wit: human beings."

I feel the same way about the run of cathedrals and the run of churches. To be sure, there are for me exceptions to the rule—exceptions which only make the general rule more binding. Whenever I am in Rome I go to St. Peter's. I don't care what your religion may be, indeed you may profess that you haven't any religion whatsoever in you, but the sheer glory, the overwhelming grandeur of that vast pile, inside and out, is an everlasting treat to the soul. The beauty of the Baptistry at Florence is a spiritual uplift to anybody except a member of the Low Forehead Club. Westminster

Abbey will do something of an emotional nature to you, especially if you are of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic descent. But that at the behest of the hired guide or the official guide-book, and only because these things are marked with asterisks, I should go madly galumphing from moldy crypt to smelly grave—that, brethren, is no longer for little Irvy.

It won't be for you, either, if so be you harken to the voice of reason and the lesson of experience as here laid down by one who long ago took every degree in the whole dadgummed lodge and who knows that the chief rewards are vexations and water-blisters.

Nearly everybody of importance in Europe appears to have been dead for several

hundred years; you'll be forcibly struck by that. Then why not let the late lamenteds rest in peace where they're comfortably planted, while you go out on your own hook, unaccompanied by official guidance if possible, and look up something worth while among the living? Why should any normal-minded Yank feel called upon to work up a bogus sentimentality upon viewing the last resting-place of Rollo the Norseman or Uric the Acid or any of those old-timers? Why should he try to summon up memories of the misty past by lingering at some ancient tomb which in the matter of janitor service has been neglected for five or six centuries? If only he'd stop to think, he'd realize that it would be just as appropriate for him to get all steamed up and weepy because it's going to be seventeen

long years before those dear little seventeen-year-locusts come back again.

As for me I've been enlightened and I freely admit it. If I had but a few hours to spend in a foreign city which I never before had seen, I should ask that first of all I be taken to a public market, a pawnshop, and a prison. Then, if I saw nothing else, I should at least have an idea of what the inhabitants of this city were like, for I'd know what their favorite food-stuffs were and what valued possessions they hocked when they were hard up and how they treated their jailed malefactors—in short, I'd have peeped behind the scenes of their private life.

Continuing to make the point direct and personal, take me, say, when I'm sojourning

in Paris. It's a pleasant afternoon in the springtime, and the horse-chestnuts are in bloom. Some ass—a well-meaning ass, mind you, but nevertheless an ass—comes to where I sit in one of those pleasant sidewalk cafés, with a stein on the table and a good cash-register ringing clear, and suggests I ought to revisit Notre Dame and prowl its endless furlongs of aisles. Do I do so? I do not. To that misguided person I speak substantially as follows:

"Sucker, listen: For several years I lived on West One-Hundred-and-Tenth Street within easy panting distance of those heights which are crowned with the imposing profile of the Cathedral of St. John the Unfinished. I've seen that great edifice mounting toward the heavens stone by stone—sometimes, on very busy days, two

stones—and I've heard it very highly spoken of by lovers of scaffolding. When I resume my round of cathedral viewing, if ever I do, I shall begin by giving that majestic structure my trade. I believe in patronizing home industries.

"Besides, sitting here without distractions except for the occasional necessity of shooing away a swarm of beggars, and about once in so often brushing out of my lap one of those gentlemen who think that merely because I'm an American I yearn to buy a stock of dirty postal-cards or go and see twenty beautiful virgins dancing without any clothes on, I can see the streams of boulevard life flow past—can study the manners of these folks and philosophize upon their attributes. And that's entertainment enough for any creature who's con-

stituted along my general lines. Hour by hour, I can sit here keeping the throat properly moistened, and wonder why so many of the French females are so *chic* and why so many of the French males think they have to be *chic*, too. I can ponder upon the intricacies of the Paris traffic laws, if any such there be other than the Law of the Survival of the Flittest, and say to myself that surely it frequently must be necessary to bury one of these taxicab boys along with a lamppost owing to the difficulty of telling which is which. By the way, my dear saphead, if you ever succeed in locating the Tomb of the Unknown Chauffeur, you'll let me know, won't you? It must be around here somewhere, and I fain would go there and stand beside it and shoot off some skyrockets.

"But for the present peaceful moment I'm happy and I'm comfortable. You toddle along to Notre Dame, if you feel that you just must, and leave me here, alone but satisfied. *Garsong, garsong, encore le tall beer, see voo play!*"

That's me. Oh, yes, I have my relapses, as who does not? Everybody succumbs to foolish temptation and slips about once in so often. Once in Lisbon, being beset by a strange, morbid craving, I made a laborious pilgrimage to what is vulgarly known as the Church of the Pickled Kings. In former times the Portuguese used to preserve their dead kings, including several who passed away rather mussily, and kept them on file in this church for exhibition purposes. Kings do not make very good preserves—I found that out. Another result was that

for several days my appetite wasn't so good.

And then again—only last winter it was and down in Panama—I suffered a kindly volunteer to waste hours of his time and my time trying to find for me the ruins of a certain Spanish building boasting a certain freakish architectural feature. What I really craved to do that hot morning was to return to the picturesque water-front or to the shopping district of the older quarter of the city with its congress of all nations. But, no, I let him lead me around and around until he stumbled on the building with the famous flat arch to support one of its upper walls. Wasn't that stupid—when at that very moment I was myself the possessor of two of the flattest arches in the known

world? And wasn't bragging about them, either.

How much better two of us managed our itinerary when three months later we reached Spain! Crossing from South America, we disembarked at Cadiz. By now, we rather fancied that we knew our minds and we proceeded to prove it. First we went to see one picture in which both of us had an interest, and then, separating, each followed more or less aimlessly his own peculiar fancy. My companion, as it happened, was interested in mural ceramics. By keeping his eye peeled, he immediately discovered that a peep into almost any doorway, no matter how dingy and crumbly and weather-beaten, would yield displays of the most marvelous old painted tiles—few patterns alike and nearly all of them beautiful

patterns. He had a perfectly wonderful time and came back to the hotel that night burbling deliriously of what he had seen.

Whereas I enjoyed myself to an equal extent through a very different sort of quest. After exploring various obscure and odorous byways, I succeeded in tracing a path to the open-fronted studio of the genius whose specialty was embroidering the rumps of the local mules, and through a fascinated afternoon I watched from the narrow sidewalk while with shears and scraper he produced designs—now a simple bit of scrolling done in hair raised from the shorn pelt, and then again an intricate, involved decoration which started at the hind quarters of the favored mule—evidently some plutocrat's pet—and spread over his withers and up his flanks and along his back clear

The open-fronted studio of a genius whose specialty was embroidering the rumps of the local mules.

onto the shoulders. This quaint custom prevails nowhere, apparently, except in Cadiz. Once in a while you see a muleteer passing with abashed head held low, and humiliation writ upon his countenance. He's so poor or so lost to pride that he hasn't even got his sweetheart's initials embroidered on his mule's south-end. But such sights are rare. I beheld only one such party, and he seemed to be hurrying home to hide his shame.

On reaching Seville we gave the exposition grounds but the briefest of surveys. To begin with, the exposition was in an unfinished state, and besides we had a feeling that when it was finished it would be pretty much like all the other expositions that ever were. We passed up the chance to make the round of the nine cigarette factories, each

one of which is the authentic cigarette factory where "Carmen" worked as a cigarette-maker before she started making Andalusian whoopee; and likewise the twenty-two separate barber shops, each being guaranteed as the shop of the original "Barber of Seville." Instead of following these ordained and tiresome routes, we put in the better part of a fruitful week soaking up and absorbing the local color of a lovely city wherein the influences of the tourist trade, the radio, and the movies had not yet standardized the people. Here were women of all classes in the mantilla, the flowing skirts, the tall shell comb, the unbobbed hair, of Old Spain; here were men—not peasants, either, but aristocratic-looking persons frequently—who jauntily wore the flat-topped sombrero which is the father and mother of

our cowboy hat, and the short jacket with the big silver buttons on it, and the broad sash and, to top off, a great flapping cape in lieu of a prosaic, hand-me-down overcoat.

Then, having rhapsodized over Granada —which deserved on its merits to be rhapsodized over by Washington Irving and by everybody who has ever followed in his footsteps—and having by painstaking investigation gleaned the information that Valencia appeared to be the only town in the world where the tune called "Valencia" never had been played or sung or whistled or hummed or even heard of, we moved along to Barcelona; and at Barcelona we enriched our education by going to a prize-fight.

Being Lent, it was the wrong season

for bull-fights although we did hear that over in Madrid the ladies were talking of getting up one to raise funds for establishing a branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. So we went to a prize-fight and there we learned this interesting truth: They don't fight there according to the Marquis of Queensbury's ritual. They use the rules laid down by another distinguished member of the British nobility, namely: the late Lord Chesterfield. Not even in Madison Square Garden, where so frequently the scrappers of the main bout refrain from antagonizing their opponents, have I seen gladiators so polite to each other in and out the ring, so scrupulously careful to avoid giving offense by word, look, or deed. Never again can anybody come around telling me that the Spanish are a

bloodthirsty race, because I've been to one of their prize-fights.

You see, such independent scouting about as this carries with it the lure of being an explorer and a pathfinder. I remembered how it was with me—and my wife—on that first visit of ours to England. At the outset, being greenhorns, we followed the beaten trails, which perhaps was as it should have been.

We saw St. Paul's, the Embankment, Windsor Castle, Parliament, Buckingham Palace, the Abbey—the orthodox box of tricks. We visited the Tower of London, where one of Mrs. Cobb's high-born ancestors is said to have been executed, and also Tyburn Hill, where some of my forebears doubtless got what was coming to 'em. But

presently, having developed initiative, we branched out as free lances, so to speak. Next only to the day which I spent sitting entranced in Bow Street Police Court studying an unending procession of East End types and admiring the dispassionate justice of the English system of administering the law to petty offenders—next to that, I say, the biggest thrill, for me at least, came on a day when the two of us hired an automobile—a considerable undertaking back in 1913—and with it a friendly, wide-awake cockney youth as driver, and bade him take us for a spin through rural England, off the beaten tourist routes. Late in the autumnal afternoon we passed a pleasant, grassy, meadow-like expanse through which a small brook went placidly meandering. The peace and kemptness of the spot stirred my ad-

miration, and I poked our driver in the back and asked if he knew whether this particular brook had any particular name.

There was a kindled twinkle in his eye as he glanced over his shoulder.

"Ow, yuss, sir," he said, "it 'as a nyme. Possible you might 'ave 'eard its nyme. The nyme is Runnymede."

Why, we felt like a couple of Christopher Columbuses! Unawares, as it were, with no preliminary ballyhooing or press-agenting to take the edge off our expectancy, we had happened upon the cradle of Anglo-Saxon liberty, the birthplace of Magna Carta, the very place where the nobles wrested from a craven tyrant the precious guarantee that Britons never shall be slaves except to catarrh.

According to my best observations, these three be the chief incentives which, on the occasion of his or her first voyage over the seas, inspire the average American.

First—To be able to send souvenir post-cards to envious stay-at-homes.

Second—To be able to brag on return of having visited the Old World.

Third—To be able to say when somebody mentions an art-gallery or a cathedral or a castle or what-not: "Oh yes, I've been there."

But I, for one, should rather boast of having looked upon some spot which the schools of the human shad have never seen and probably never will see—some scene which gave me an insight into the comedy and tragedy of life abroad—than to have to admit that I'd seen only what millions be-

fore me had seen; what millions after me would be content to see.

Wouldn't you?

So I beg you not to let these guide-book sharps sweep you right off your feet. Believe me, you'll be needing those feet before you get through.

The Stray Lamb

By THORNE SMITH

Author of "Topper"

"WITH all its hilarity 'The Stray Lamb' is a wise and te[illegible]le. There is room for satirical [illegible] wit that stings amid all the h[illegible]

—*New York Times.*

"If you ca[illegible]cept a fairy tale, however modern, and if you like rich, ridiculous nonsense, by all means seize hold of 'The Stray Lamb' and treat yourself to grand entertainment."

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